

A Worrying Prospect for Today's Students in an Industrial Society

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Abstract

A baby's horizon is where it can touch. As the years go by it extends further to add friends to the immediate family, some travel and the ubiquitous smart phone. Eventually the teenager will be asked, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" The answer will come from accumulated fantasies, not reality. This is a problem because the school's career guidance is based on the student's choices rather than matching their personality to jobs and the culture of companies. Huge technology changes are coming. The infrastructure is already being installed.

Keywords: Industrial Society; Teenager

Introduction

The first fact to impress on today's students is that they are unique. They can expect to live to a hundred. Retirement, if it happens, will not be before eighty. During that time, technological changes will force career changes. Flexibility is essential. With whom they are compatible depends on an employer that suits their outlook on life or it may be that they are not willing to be employed; they want to deal directly with their own customers.

The market is also the provider

Start by looking at the market where a strange creature is also the supplier; it is you, all of us. See first the stomach. It needs more food than another animal of the same size or weight because it has a brain that usually burns more energy than its muscles. The stomach is adaptable and can digest a great variety of food. It likes variety and will search for different foods for the novelty. In total, food for humans, from growing to the table, is very likely the largest industry in the world. The careers in food are limitless. Everyone has to eat. Novelty is rare with the only recent innovation being non-animal meat claimed to be generating less carbon which would otherwise warm the climate.

The energy hungry brain is almost two brains. The original version that absorbed information and communicated is now supplanted with a bigger one taking in digital entertainment without limit; an unprecedented market. There is an abundance of supply and where and whether it will produce an income remains to be seen for on that question hangs the answer to whether it provides careers.

Many animals move around foraging. As the seasons change, they hibernate or migrate. This also applied to humans but only a few are still nomadic, the rest have developed agriculture and housing whilst enjoying travelling for the fun of it. The travel in-

dustry is growing and employs many people. Their insatiable brains want to explore the other side of the hill. Some want adventure. For others, safe sight-seeing is sufficient.

The military protects against foreigners and the police against locals. A big fear is illness with a belief that doctors and hospitals can heal as easily as a garage repairs broken cars. There are many jobs in security and healthcare with governments and insurers providing the money.

Look now at the loose skin between thumb and forefinger. This will be significant in the next few years.

Premature decisions

Selecting a further education course according to the anticipated employment is unwise. Students are too young to commit. The education system is not flexible. Fortunately, employers are and many welcome graduates without caring what or where they studied. They seek out potential team members, people who will enjoy the sense of family within the company and share their objectives. Schools and universities exaggerate their influence on employers. If they have any, it lies in bestowing confidence and a work ethic in the student that they will carry forward to adulthood.

Schools should allow more opportunity for students to know themselves rather than threaten them with failure for not spending more time swotting. Ask a company executive what knowledge they use at work and few will refer to anything learned beyond the age of sixteen. Some scientists need advanced training and even what they picked up at university is left behind when they enter their employer's laboratory. It is in industry where innovation erupts driven by a perceived gap in the market. Occasionally something new emerges for which a market has to be found but this is rare and when it does happen it is seldom the original creator who later profits from the discovery. Most scientific research is closed

ended meaning that it is looking for the answer to a specific question. Open ended research is not funded so only happens as a spin off from focused research.

Teenage students are still discovering their own personalities and have no real understanding of life at work. This is where the current system is weak. The truth is seldom displayed. Companies recruiting will show what students want to see. The military promote the outdoor life and travel. The police talk about doing good in society and the medical profession claims to save lives and keep people healthy. There are no lies in these offers but they are only part of a wider picture which is not seen until later after much time has been invested, only to discover that it is all a mistake and a broken dream.

Many career officers will talk of risky companies and job security. The inference being that a secure job is preferable. It means a job for life. Keep your nose clean and you will always have food on the table. This appeals to teachers who have sought a safe job

for themselves. In reality, what is safe and satisfying is not always what the teacher describes. They only know what is sent to them by employers. A listing of companies from safe to risky, from high pay to low pay, does not help a student find a job in which they will perform well and be happy.

Just as people have personalities, companies have a culture shaped by rules and its staff. Career guidance should match personalities to company cultures. A good fit leads to better pay rewarding profitable performance.

The freedom continuum

The continuum on which to classify companies is according to freedom. The table here shows the range of types of companies with those on the left where an employee has little scope for initiative, they are trapped, and on the right total freedom with the opportunity to make a huge fortune or disappear ignominiously with no money or friends.

Trapped			Freedom	
Serving the State	Public Companies	Private Companies	Self Employed	Entrepreneur
Work for the Organisation Tight Regulations	Profit Orientated for Shareholders	Profits for Owners	Work for Themselves	Answer to Nobody
Local Government	Chain Stores	Shops	Websites	Adventure
Utilities	Insurance	Restaurants	Entertainment	
Legal	Banks	Hotels	Hair and Beauty	
Education	Shipping	Factories	Craftsmen	
Medical	Airlines		Electrician	
Police	Construction		Plumber	
Military	Manufacturing			
Pay Scale and Pension			No Limit, No Promise	
Obedience			Innovation	
Regular Hours and Holidays			All Hours	
Bureaucracy			Self-Drive	
Even the Boss Has A Boss			You Are the Boss	
Loyal Worker			Unemployable	
Enforce			Persuade	

Table 1

State owned organisations

All companies can be fitted into the range described above. With many schools promoting secure jobs and recommending government service, look first at the left side of the table. Here you will find James Bond, not the flamboyant man of fiction but an innocuous person in the secret service. He has lost his identity and told where to live. If he lives long enough to retire, he can never admit what he used to do. The chances of getting killed are 50% with death following torture. Now look at the rest of the military. The job is to kill or be killed. If that cannot be done, the military

is ineffective. How many schools make that clear when they salute their Army Cadet Corps which brings in welcome funds from the Ministry of Defence? Housing is provided, early retirement brings with it a lump sum payment and a pension whilst the person is still young enough to find another job or business. After years of military service, many find it difficult to adjust to a change in life style and very few are capable of managing money to run their own business. The police force is less encapsulating but still overwhelms the employee. The job is dangerous with unsocial hours and a lot of form-filling.

No less enveloping is a medical career. It takes many years to qualify as a doctor and even the highest paid in government hospitals earn no more than a successful salesman. Private medicine provides opportunities to treat rich patients or those covered by insurance and even then, the hours at work are on top of the hours at the government hospital. Medicine is highly regulated. Initiative is practically forbidden. A new idea spends years being written about and tested going from laboratory to animal before reaching humans. The best way to pursue a medical career is work, smile and say little.

Education is similarly restrictive. The syllabus is dictated by the government. The teacher is assessed according to the exam results of their students. Inspectors appear without warning and their opinion gained on a flying visit condemns the school until the next visit. Parents are never consulted.

Regulations and government scrutiny pervade all the companies owned by the government. Doing well is not measured by financial performance; set targets have to be achieved and those targets can change at the whim of a politician who can then be replaced by the ruler or the electorate. Uncertainty is at the core of a career that was expected to be secure.

Accountants and lawyers may be self-employed or working for private companies but their performance is regulated by the State.

All state-owned companies are bureaucracies. This means that each person operates as a cell within a larger, carefully defined structure with reporting rules and limited responsibilities. If the student feels that working inside such a bubble is what they want, then let them seek a government job. It is the careers officer's duty to be honest with the student and if the teacher does not know what it is like to be a Civil Servant they must say so. No job is a holiday. There are always pressures. They get worse when it is not clear to the incumbent what is expected of them. There will be rule books and guidelines which have to be studied. Go up the line asking what something means. Every boss has a higher boss and everyone wants to pass the responsibility to someone else. This passing the buck becomes more important than achieving an objective. It is generally accepted that profit orientated companies are more efficient than civil servants and it is the effort spent avoiding criticism that is the cause of government incompetence.

Public owned companies

The difference between government organisations and large public owned companies is that the aim of the large companies is to earn a profit for shareholders. The calculation of profitability defines the purpose. Such a clear goal is seldom available in government owned, regulated operations so from time to time the government invites company executives from the private sector to advise government departments. A report will be written, a handsome payment made, and then things continue as before.

Rewards in the form of titles are handed out to government servants more than to workers in the profit seeking sector. To become a knight or a lord, a medieval title, now without money, is still prized and can distort a person's objective and loyalty.

When a company grows, its finances are often better managed when they are distributed amongst many shareholders whose stakes can be traded daily on a stock market. The bigger the company, the less the executives will own of the company and the more they are answerable to the shareholders, often every quarter and always at the annual general meeting. All large organisations operate bureaucratically so that there are clear departments with lines of command. The difference between the big company and the civil service is that in the big company there is always someone at the top whom everyone in the company can, in theory, contact. It may be by an internal mail or managing to catch them in the company car park but both people, the boss and the worker, share the same objective, to make the company profitable. It is this shared focus which makes the operation work. Poor management is when the boss loses focus, fails to pass the message to all in the company and they meander along whilst a competitor steals their market.

Large companies are to be found in all market sectors. Usually they operate internationally which increases the employment opportunities. They will visit universities looking for people who they feel will fit in their company, show some interest in what has been studied, pretend to be impressed by the marks and are really only interested in how the student presents them self. They look for confidence. Talking and meeting others is the job. Your brain power is taken for granted. You have a degree and it doesn't matter what. The feeling in a company has to be as friendly as in a family. Everyone helps each other. They are team players. Show signs of high ambition and you will be directed to a smaller company or advised to try setting up your own company.

Privately owned companies

The difference between a public company and a private company is that shares in the public company can be traded on an open market whereas the private company's shareholders negotiate directly with the company and its main shareholders. Usually, but not always, a private company is smaller than a public company. A company that has grown and floated on the stock market with its founder still at the helm may find the shareholders' meeting irritating. Keeping a company private allows the owners to work on a longer-term project without being chased for dividends every three months. It is in the private company where bumping into the boss in the car park is easier to arrange.

Self-employment

Two of the main problems of social cohesion in the modern world are alienation and anomie. The end result is mental breakdown and all the disruptions that ensue. Alienation is a feeling of not belonging anywhere. Anomie is similar and refers to the sense

of not sharing the same values with those around you. Getting lost in a crowd can happen in a bureaucracy. Good management will watch for it simply because an employee is a resource and when they become detached, they are underperforming. Just as recruiters are looking for family members, the candidate is looking for a good home. A job is a lot more than the money. Many people will work for less in return for praise. A charismatic owner will win over customers and all concerned are rewarded.

There may come a time when working for someone else is not satisfying. It may be that you have ideas which do not interest your employer or you simply want to steal what they do and do it better. It could even be that you have no choice; the company has gone bust and you struggle to find a new job so you branch out alone.

The bulk of employment is not with the government and large companies but amongst the many smaller companies and the self-employed. Individuality rises to the surface and most of the learning at school and university is forgotten. Your own self emerges. The accumulation of experience is what gives you a USP. This is an abbreviation now common in business meaning a Unique Selling Point. Something has to distinguish you from a competitor so that a customer will prefer to buy from you.

The entrepreneur

A few years ago, going into business came to be called entrepreneurialism. This long French word was originally used only to refer to an innovative idea. Business was what had been done before. For example, opening a café was not entrepreneurial. The business formula for a café is well known. There may be some USP in the location, the menu and the style but it is still a café.

An entrepreneur would be diving into the unknown with an idea that may work but still to be tested. If it does work, the rewards are unlimited. This is where the very rich get their money. Being an also-ran generates only average earnings. To open a new market satisfying needs even the customers never realised they had, is where the big money lies.

Look back at the freedom chart and see the range of opportunities and how they accommodate a range of personality types. Everyone will say they want money and security. Drill down to what that really means. Have they got the determination to be an entrepreneur, the charm to work their way up the company tree or will working quietly in an office be enough to satisfy a life's ambition? The answer is unknown and can never be known to a teenager, maybe not even to an undergraduate. It is therefore nonsense to be faced with these choices but that is the current system. One has to be flexible, keep all options open and take each decision one step at a time.

Disruptive technology

Today's students never knew a world without smart phones. A quill pen or a typewriter are equally ancient. Teenagers expect

change. Unfortunately, their career guidance does not. There was a recent circular at a school about training to be an airline pilot. By the time any of those students qualified to fly it would be illegal to fly a plane in the air. Already, military flying is more about drone control than being up there in the cockpit.

All governments crave control, be they democratic or autocratic. There is a belief that letting AI (artificial intelligence) in quantum computers track credit and debit card transactions will follow people's behaviour. There is an easier way and it is already in use on animals. A chip is inserted somewhere in the beast and it stays there until it reaches the abattoir confirming the quality of the meat. Pet owners can have their dogs chipped to find them if they get lost. In America there are a few companies letting their employees be chipped so that they can pass through locked doors without hinderance. A very small chip is injected into the loose skin between thumb and forefinger. Presumably it can be sucked out if necessary.

The deal the governments will offer is simple: bear the chip and you will have medical care for life; no chip, no healthcare, death. Everyone will accept the chips (except me). Go down the street unchipped and the police trackers will find you as you pass one lamp post and before you reach the next. Today's teenagers will not resist this offer. For them, the threats of Orwell's 1984 were fiction. Better to comply with the government than fight because you cannot fight from inside prison.

The speed with which the world is tracked will be amazingly rapid. The consequences for jobs should be appreciated. The military and police will not exist as we know them today. There can be no crime. Everyone is known, who they are and where they are within a few yards (meters). Their bank account is managed by that chip so they have no secrets. It is their passport. Border crossings will be automated. Before you reach the border, you will be told whether or not you can go through. Adultery may be impossible. Try to resist the chip and being banned from hospital is the least of the inconveniences.

Politically, eradicating crime and foreign enemies is a winner. By the time today's student is trained in the police or the military, the job will be totally different and there may be very few such jobs. More jobs will emerge supporting the trackers. Quite what they will be can only be envisaged. Self-service shops, we now call them supermarkets, will be truly self-service. There will be no staff in the shop; goods are placed on the shelves automatically from the conveyors behind the shelves. Customers walk in, pick up and walk out. Payment is extracted when the chip passes the scanner at the doorway. Chips are in the products as well as the customer.

All this technology exists now. It is happening and when the surge comes it will not take a year or two like it did for film to give way to digital photography, it will happen as fast as the clinics can inject chips into everyone. The 5G infrastructure to handle the digi-

tal traffic is being installed now. Their powerful electro-magnetic fields will damage health further increasing the dependence of people on hospitals.

Monitoring health is where the power lies. That is the leverage on every individual. It used to be the power to kill. Then executions gave way to life imprisonment. Now it is the power to prevent death. Take away that protection from a person and they face a death penalty the next time they become ill. Governments keep their people in fear; only the threat has changed and this time no one escapes.

Now think what to study at university to find the best jobs.

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